An Essay on

Dyspepsia

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Dyspepsia.

By the term Dyspepsia is understood difficult digestion or indigestion, under which, various morbid affections of the stomach have been classed, such as chronic gastritis, irritations of all kinds whether vascular or nervous, debility, or depression of the stomach &c.

The nomenclature however is incorrect instead of expressing a particular pathological condition, it merely refers to a result which may originate from different and even opposite conditions of the stomach. Still this is of little or no importance to homoeopaths, as classifying diseases

can be done away with. The disease varies so much in its modes of attack, progress, violence and duration, that there has been a difference among physicians in regard to its true nature. Its nature and precise location, have been and are to a considerable extent involved in obscurity. Dyspepsia is a disease which under different circumstances displays an almost innumerable amount of symptoms, it may make its appearance in a gradual or almost imperceptible manner, or it may supervene suddenly without previous warning of its existance. Its symptoms may also only manifest themselves after the use of certain indigestible articles of food; or it may effect the system in such a manner as to remind its victim constantly of its presence

uneasy sensations. In others again it is craving or perverted. Generally the desire for food is characterized by a feeling of hollowness or sinking in the epigastrium, which if not responded to by partaking of food becomes very distressing. Thirst however is not unfrequent. Flatulent eructations and regurgitations of food chyme or offensive liquid are common symptoms. Nausea and vomiting as well as pyrosis are frequent attendants of this disease.

The foregoing symptoms belong more especially to the stomach. There are other symptoms which have their seat elsewhere, among which are various disordered sensations, such as severe headache, vertigo, pain between the shoulders, uneasiness about the throat, irritation of the larynx, and fauces, leading to frequent attempts to clear the throat.

There is generally a tendency to low spirits, a

feeling of indifference, or anxiety, dread of the future apprehensiveness, indisposition to exertion &c.

The patient is apt to imagine himself affected with some organic disease of the heart or lungs, Palpitations of the heart, dyspnoea, and short dry cough are symptoms which tend to confirm these melancholy impressions.

Sleep is generally disturbed, either by unpleasant dreams, or by nightmare, and the patient awakes unrefreshed, much depressed in mind, with dread as night again approaches. In some cases however sleep is sound, and affords the patient the only interval of ease.

The tongue is usually furred, especially in the morning. In some cases frothy saliva is constantly being secreted, which obliges the patient to spit almost constantly.

The pulse is variable; in some cases quite

natural, in others more or less frequent, it is more generally irritable, being regular in ordinary circumstances, but thrown into great disorder by the least physical or mental excitement.

The bowels are usually constipated, unless the small intestines are complicated with the disease.

The hepatic functions are not unfrequently deranged, the secretion of bile is either too scant, or too profuse, generally the former.

The urine is variously affected, sometimes scanty, or copious and almost colorless.

The foregoing symptoms are not all present in every case, but are considerably diversified in each case. There are scarcely two patients in which striking differences might not be observed.

The patient generally becomes much emaciated with flabby muscles, sunken abdomen, and an anxious expression of countenance. The disease seldom proves entirely fatal. In the majority of cases, the patient entirely recovers; or so far as to be liable to an attack only on a renewed application of the cause.

The chief danger of this disease however is that the reduced stength of the patient may disenable the the system from overcoming other diseases by which it may be assailed.

Causes. Among the most prolific causes of Dyspepsia may be enumerated the combined influence of sedentary habits and errors in diet. There are others however which deserve equal attention. Whatever calls off nervous energy from the stomach and concentrates it elsewhere depreses the gastric functions, and

favors the production of this disease. Persons who are sedentary, and at the same time indulgent to their appetites are particularly liable to its attacks. Hence the frequency of this disease among students is readily accounted for. Irregularities in diet, such as the habitual use of indigestible food, affording a mechanical impediment to the action of the gastric juice. Food insufficiently masticated, irregular eating hours, and also the habit of rapid eating conduces to the same result.

The same effect results from the excessive use of spirituous liquors, coffee tobacco or other cerebral or nervous stimulants, as from indigestible articles of food, by calling the stomach into excessive action, and thus occasioning secondary depression and finally loss of tone by exhaustion from over excitability.

Late hours, inattention to the daily fæcal evacuations, the habitual use of cathartics, profuse evacuations excess of venery, mental emotions, are causes which are also favorable in the production of this disease.

The morbid appearances to be observed in post mortem examinations are chiefly confined to the pylorie portion of the stomach which is often found in a contracted, scirrhus, or ulcerated condition. In almost every instance however, the stomach is perceived to be considerably distended with air.

Treatment. The first and most important indication in the treatment of Dyspepsia is, obviously to remove the causes. While these continue to act, the most judicious efforts of the physician will for the most part be either quite nugatory, or but partially successful.

The patient may be relived or may even be apparently cured. but the disease will often return under less favorable circumstances of constitution than at first, and though a partial restoration may be again effected and the alternation of relief and relapse may occur several times; yet there is great danger that the powers of vital resistance may be overcome before the morbid causes shall have ceased to act. The patient should therefore abandon his former habits of excess and should pay strict attention to his diet, exercise, and also to his general habits. moral as well as physical. Attention to diet is indispensable. In many cases when the disease has originated from no other causes than from over indulgence in the pleasures of the table, no other remedial measures are necessary.

The patient should avoid all substances of difficult digestion, and food which under any circumstances disagree with him, even if they pertain to the aliments allowed in taking homoeopathic medicines. It is always considerably difficult for the physician to select a suitable regimen for the dyspeptic, for the peculiarities of individual stomachs are so numerous, that an article easily digestible by one will often prove indigestible by another. The patient can best select a suitable diet for himself by observing attentively to the effects which different articles of food exert upon his constitution. The patient should eat at regular intervals, and should eat slowly so that the food can be well masticated and be properly fitted for the processes of digestion. The habit of drinking largely

at meals is injurious, hence the solvent power of the gastric juice is diminished by too great dilution.

Exercise is also essential in the treatment of this disease. It must not be taken however as a task, but as a pleasant recreation, and it is always desirable to connect with it the pursuit of interest or enjoyment. Hence one of the advantages in traveling.

The patient should observe regularity and moderation in all his habits. Excesses are injurious. He should retire early to bed and obtain sufficient sleep to enable the system to recover entirely from the fatigue of the preceding day, and should never permit pleasure, business, or study to encroach upon his period of rest.

Attention should be paid daily to the alvine evacuations. A passage should be

solicited daily at a regular hour. The inclination no doubt will not be present at first but let the patient be punctual and never fail in his readiness, and the bowels will soon form the habit of responding. The patient should also keep his mind from dwelling upon his complaint, or from anything that has a tendency to depress his feelings.

Among the most approved homoeopathic remedies for the treatment of Dyspepsia are Nux vomica, Sulphur Pulsatilla, Bryonia Calcarea, China, Lachesis, Mercurius, Hepar, Ignatia and Rhus toxicodendron.

Nux vomica is indicated when the disease has been brought on by the abuse of alcoholic drinks, or by sedentary habits keeping late hours, excessive use of tobacco, mental exertions &c. Among the most

prominent symptoms indicating this remedy are headache attended with vertigo, increased by mental exertion; distention of the epigastrium with inability to wear tight clothes, pyrosis, thirst, bitter eructations, constipation, reddish urine also languor and dread of exercise. Sleep is unrefreshed. This remedy is particularly applicable to persons of billious temperament, of plethoric habits and persons disposed to haemorrhoids. The patient has a great desire to talk about his condition and doubts his recovery.

Pulsatilla is a remedy particularly adapted to females and children or rather to persons of mild or phlegmatic dispositions. Among the characteristic symptoms we find aggravation of the symptoms from fat and rich food, cold hands and feet. Thirst

is generally wanting. nausea. dyspnoea. diarrhea. colic with borborygmus. throbbing in the epigastrium. The patient has a tendency to Hypochondriasis.

Sulphur is valuable in chronic cases where the system is debilitated and when the following symptoms present themselves Languor and great aversion to all exertion food has no taste or tastes saltish. symptoms are aggravated after the use of animal food nausea after eating melancholy. disgusted with life. irregular appetite burning in the face and hands. tenderness in the epigastrium. even from the slightest contact. This remedy like Nux is also useful to persons disposed to haemorrhoids.

Calcarea is suitable to persons of lymphatic. plethoric or feeble constitution.

Among the characteristics are found loss of appetite with constant thirst, unnatural hunger which is not removed by partaking of food, sleepiness after a meal, desire for stimulants, urine of a dark brown color, evacuations either too frequent or too tardy, often consisting of indigestible matter, debility &c.

China is a valuable remedy in the treatment of this disease especially when it has been occasioned by loss of animal fluids, or from miasmatic influences.

Also when there is gastric disturbance from the least irregularities, debility, dread of exercise, difficulty in getting to sleep at night, chilliness, ill humour.

This remedy is also applicable when the disease occurs in spring or autumn or in the neighborhood of marshes, canals &c.

Lachesis is also useful in chronic cases when there is a desire for food which however does not agree, disposition to yeald to vexation, jealousy, constipation, sleep attended with constant dreaming, aggravation of the symptoms after waking.

This remedy is useful after Hepar.

Mercurius is indicated when there is an exacerbation of the symptoms after eating, voracity, with speedy repletion after eating, aversion to solid food especially warm food constipation frequently attended with tenesmus, irascibility, hypochondriasis &c.

Bryonia is recommended in cases where there is canine hunger alternated with anorexia, pains are worse while eating, loathing of food so much so that even the smell of food is intolerable, constipation,

irascibility, restlessness and obstinacy. This remedy is also indicated when the disease occurs in summer or when there is considerable damp or hot whether.

Rhus toxicodendron is servicable when the patient has a great desire for dainties. vertigo after eating, hypochondriacal mood, dread of the future. The patient is uneasy concerning his health and takes every thing in a bad way, discouragement &c.

Ignatia has been found efficacious when the disease has been occasioned by grief or other depressing emotions. despair of recovery, dread of misfortune The patient seeks solitude and broods over imaginary troubles. This remedy is especially useful in Dyspepsia of business men.

Hepar. is recommended in cases of long standing, when the disease has been accasioned by the abuse of mercury, and also when there is derangement of the stomach notwithstanding the most careful diet. desire for stimulants, the bowels are generally constipated.

Among other remedies which have been found beneficial may be mentioned. Phosphorus. which is indicated when the disease is hereditary. considerable flatulence, and when there is pain in the back opposite the epigastrium. after eating.

Arsenicum is beneficial when the patient is laboring under the effects of quinine, also when there is a degree of faintness and oppression.